

Preparing for Ceremonial Work

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Every ceremony has a beginning, middle, and end. Shamanic journeying is also considered a ceremony.

Preparation

Setting up an Altar

You can set up an altar in a space where you perform your shamanic work. This creates sacred space providing a path between the visible and invisible realms. On a table or on the floor, place a special piece of cloth or a small rug. Place on the cloth or rug some crystals or stones from nature, some flowers, or even a candle you can burn when doing sacred work. Creating sacred space supports your spiritual work. Some people like to burn sacred herbs such as sage, cedar, or sweetgrass. You can find incense that assists in supporting a sacred state of consciousness.

I replace certain things on my altar with new sacred objects when I feel I need a reflection of a major shift I have made in my life. My altar changes as I change.

Go to your altar when you are sending out prayers or asking for healing. I place names of people who are asking for help on my altar. I return to my altar during times when I need some comfort.

Drumming, Rattling, Singing and Dancing

Shamans leave their ordinary thoughts and day behind and go into an ecstatic state in order to be a vessel of the helping spirits and the healing and transformative energies of the invisible realms. These are ways you can prepare for your sessions and also for your continued ceremonial work.

To prepare for our ceremonial work try to do some activity or take some action that moves you from work and the daily activities of your day so you can move fully into the invisible realms. Even a symbolic act can be helpful like washing your face or hands. It is important to leave your ordinary world behind. This is so important before we perform our virtual ceremonies together to open to the true power that can come through us as hollow bones.

Here are some suggestions:

Put on a special scarf, shirt, piece of clothing that represents you are putting your ego aside and your day behind so that your spirit can shine through.

Light a candle. Cleanse yourself by burning some sacred herbs such as sage, sweetgrass, palo santo, or your favorite incense.

Sit in silence and meditate before performing your journeywork.

Take a walk in nature.

Drum or rattle and sing or dance until you feel like you have let go of your ordinary concerns. Shamans sing a variety of power songs that assist them in moving their ego/personality out of the way so the helping spirits can work through them. This is why shamans are seen to be "hollow bones" or "empty reeds" while they are doing their healing, divination, and ceremonial work.

To get a power song you can take a walk in nature and just let your soul sing. A traditional way of getting a power song is to sit by a tree and hold an intention for a song to come. You can drum or rattle for yourself and let your soul sing. Please do not judge your ability to sing. It is our birthright to sing. Everything in nature that is alive sings!! Singing is a great way to prepare for your shamanic work, and it also makes you feel good.

It is difficult to journey after a big or heavy meal. Try eating lightly in order to have journeys that have more clarity. Alcohol makes journeys fuzzy. Please abstain from drinking alcohol before you journey or perform a ceremony.

These are just suggestions. Find ways to prepare for your work that assist you in becoming a clear vessel to bridge the beauty, power, and healing from the invisible into the tangible realms. Preparation is key to any successful ceremony!!

Welcoming, Honoring, and Greeting the Helping Spirits

When you call in and greet the helping spirits make sure you use the intention to call in **Helping and Compassionate Spirits. You are not just calling in ANY SPIRITS.**

It is so important for you to find your own way to welcome, honor, and greet your helping spirits. This is simple courtesy. You are inviting your helping spirits to work in partnership with you and you want to begin by greeting them. If you repeat an invocation by rote it will have no power. The helping spirits read your heart not your mind. Speak to them from your heart. This is an invocation I have used simply to give you an idea of a way to create your own invocations.

The following invocation is excerpted from *Walking in Light: The Everyday Empowerment of Shamanic Life* copyright 2014 Sandra Ingerman (Sounds True).

Take a few deep breaths and get comfortable. Think about a favorite place in nature that you enjoy visiting. This is a place of beauty, a place where you can relax and feel calm. It is a sacred place for you. Now imagine yourself in this place of peace and healing. Close your eyes and breathe deeply. Notice how your energy flows through your body. Place your hands on your heart and feel your heart opening with each breath in and breath out. Breathe out any disturbing thoughts and breathe in love. Breathe all the way down into your abdomen. Send the energy of your breath to any part of your body that feels tense and release the tension as you exhale. Notice the thoughts, feelings, sensations, and images that arise as you breathe. Notice the sounds around you as you breathe in and breathe out. And as you continue to breathe deeply, take a step back and leave your everyday life behind you for now.

Experience yourself standing in this sacred landscape as fully as you can right now. Open your senses to take in the beauty of the landscape you are standing in. Look around you.

What plant life is here?

Are there any animals?

Are there any rocks or minerals?

Is there a body of water?

What is the quality of earth like?

Are you in the mountains, or in a forest, in the desert, or on a beach?

Is the sun shining?

Are there clouds in the sky? What is the color of the sky?

What are all the colors surrounding you? Drink in all the colors with your eyes.

Feel yourself fully present in this landscape. Feel the earth beneath you.

Feel the air on your skin. Is it warm or is it cold? Is the air moist or is it dry? Is the air still, are you being caressed by gentle breezes, or is the wind blowing strong?

Listen to the sounds of nature. Do you hear the sounds of any water, birdcalls, or animal noises? Do you hear the wind?

Take a very deep breath and breathe in the wonderful clean and fresh fragrances of this peaceful place. The fragrances might be ones you have smelled before bringing back happy memories, or they might be new to you.

Feel yourself absorbing the life-giving light of the sun into all your cells. Feel the emotions that arise from being in such a sacred place filled with peace and beauty. Open your heart and feel love, peace, and gratitude within.

As you open to your sensory awareness, experience your mind quieting and your energy expanding. Experience the peace and healing of this place. You are held in the loving arms of the power of the universe and life itself. You are not alone; you are part of a greater whole. The Earth has a heartbeat, and as you breathe deeply, you experience yourself becoming one with her heartbeat. As you feel the beat of your heart like the rhythm of a drumbeat, feel your heart pulse with love and gratitude for the beauty of nature and all it shares with you.

Begin by honoring the directions.

Honor and greet the East. The East represents the spring. It is the place of the rising sun always reminding you of new beginnings and the chance of unlimited possibilities.

Honor and greet the South, the season of summer. Give thanks for the protection you receive as you live your life from a state of love. The South can represent the direction of intuition and living from a state of awe and wonder as you did as a child.

Honor and greet the West, the season of autumn and the direction of the setting sun. The West teaches you about the power of death and rebirth. There is always the new that comes from letting go of what no longer serves you.

Honor and greet the North, the season of winter. Give thanks for the wisdom that is shared from your ancestral spirits.

Honor and greet the sky above and the earth below, and acknowledge that you bridge the great powers of Heaven and Earth through your open heart. Honor your inner divine spirit that is a reflection of the creator.

Next give thanks to the spirit of the Earth who provides you with beauty and the nurturance to thrive.

Feel gratitude for the living being we call air, which is the first living being who welcomed you into the world as you took your first breath. Air is your constant companion as you are always in connection with it as you breathe. And air teaches you about your connection with all of life as you share some of your DNA as you breathe out and breathe in the DNA of others.

Send your gratitude to water. There is no life without water. Water held you while you were growing in your mother's womb and then escorted you into the world. Water fills your cells with life-giving nurturance.

Greet and give thanks to the sun for the energy you need to thrive. The sun reminds you of the passion for life and reflects back to you the divine light that shines within. The sun is a teacher of unconditional giving, for it gives without asking for anything in return.

Honor, greet, and give thanks to the moon and the stars for sharing beauty and wisdom and for providing you with guidance. You honor the moon and stars by shining your light reflecting the beauty of the night sky.

Breathe out love to all the living beings who live in the elements, the spirit that lives in all things. Honor the animals, birds, insects, fish, reptiles, trees, plants, minerals, and rocks.

Honor, greet, and give thanks to the spirit of the helping ancestors who have sacrificed much so that you may live a life filled with peace, harmony, love, light, and abundance.

Acknowledge, honor, greet, and give thanks to the Hidden Folk who are the fairies, elves, little people, and forest guardians who remind you of the magic of life. These nature spirits caretake the Earth and love

it so. Give thanks to the Spirit of the Land where you live for providing you with a home.

Give thanks to all the helping spirits who continue to share their wisdom, healing, and unconditional love. Give thanks to them for lighting your path, leading to a deep, rich, and joyful life.

Ending and Closing

Make sure you return fully from your journeys/meditation/ceremonial work. If you journey while performing a ceremony retrace your steps slowly back into the room you are journeying in. If you do not feel fully grounded then please repeat the return. You can do this by replaying the return beat on the CD you are listening to. If you are drumming or rattling you can drum or rattle the return beat again. Or you can find two sticks and just click the sticks together as you slowly return from the invisible realms feeling fully grounded and back.

After finishing a journey or ceremony you can do a meditation where you experience your body fully connecting with the earth. Imagine sitting with a tree and feel yourself rooting into the earth like a tree has deep roots connecting it to the earth. The stronger the roots the stronger the tree.

When you complete a journey or ceremony thank all the helping and compassionate spirits who joined in the work. Let them know your work is done. They already know this but it is simple courtesy to thank and close the circle.